



COVID-19 VACCINE: What You Need to Know

LAST UPDATED: 1/29/2021

Current COVID-19 vaccines

There are two COVID-19 vaccines currently in use: the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (commonly called the Pfizer vaccine) and the Moderna vaccine.

Safe and effective

Vaccines are approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA authorization means that trials have proven the vaccine an effective defense against COVID-19. The FDA and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will continue to monitor safety and effectiveness data.

Safety is a top priority. No steps were skipped during the clinical trials and data review process for COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID vaccines are being held to the same standards as other vaccines to make sure they are safe.

No cost to the patient

While we remain in the pandemic, the federal government has ensured that vaccines are made available to those in need without cost to the individual. A provider cannot ask a patient for payment, though they can bill insurance for a vaccine administration fee or the federal government if the person is uninsured. A provider also may not bill for a regular office visit to administer the vaccine.

Who gets it right now

The first round of vaccines in Louisiana (Phase 1A) is being given to hospital personnel, residents and staff of nursing home/long-term-care facilities, and frontline responders to serve as vaccinators (emergency medical services, fire personnel and law enforcement).

As of January 4, 2021, the vaccine is also available in a **very limited amount** to any and all of the following groups (Phase 1B, Tier 1):

- Persons ages 70 years or older in the community,
- Health-related support personnel (labs, mortuary, pharmacy),
- Outpatient clinic providers and clinic staff,
- Urgent care clinic providers and staff,
- Community care clinic providers and staff,
- Behavioral health providers and staff,
- Dialysis providers and recipients,
- Home care providers (including hospice workers) and home care recipients (including older and younger people with disabilities over the age of 16 who receive community or home-based care, as well as clients of home health agencies),
- Dental providers and staff,
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSPs) working in community and clinic-based settings, and clients who are both deaf and blind, and
- Students, residents, faculty and staff of allied health schools (if not already receiving vaccine or in a plan to receive from their respective schools).



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On January 12, the federal government announced major changes to the national COVID-19 vaccination strategy, including opening up priority groups to include people ages 65 or older, people with underlying conditions, and releasing all available doses. Just as it did with ACIP recommendations, the Department of Health will closely study the effect changes will have on Louisiana residents, especially vulnerable populations. The appropriate administration of second doses remains a top priority. **No decisions have been made about the January 12 changes.**

Who's next

In no particular order, the next groups who will be eligible to receive the vaccine (Phase 1B, Tier 2) are:

- Essential governmental response personnel
- Judiciary personnel
- Department of Homeland Security personnel, National Guard (non-COVID deployed, federal intelligence and security personnel, military personnel
- First responders not covered in Phase 1A
- Corrections officers and jailers
- Medical transportation services
- Homeless shelter and other congregate group home/center staff
- K-12 and daycare personnel
- Food processing and agricultural workers
- Postal personnel
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers and other deemed frontline essential workers

LDH will make an announcement when vaccine becomes available to these groups.

General public

LDH is following prioritization guidance from ACIP, and continues to review and consider how best to apply this guidance to Louisiana. This is a fluid process, and allocation may evolve depending on the amount of vaccine that is ultimately available to Louisiana.

The vaccine is likely to become more widely available for the general population in late spring/summer 2021. When this happens, having a large portion of the population vaccinated is our best shot at a return to some form of normalcy. Based on conversations with our federal partners, we are encouraged that Louisiana will receive enough doses to vaccinate everyone who wants a shot.